

# **Proofs of United States Stamps**

**Mark Scheuer**

**Presented at a meeting of  
The Rochester Philatelic Association**

**along with a collection of proofs**

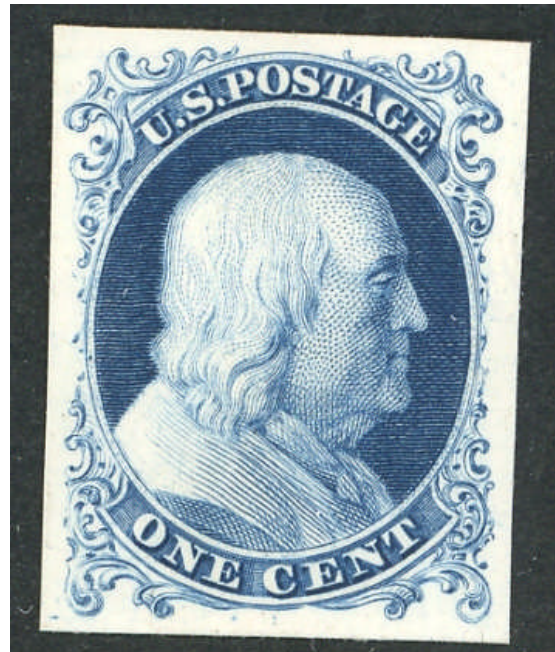
**Feb 14, 2008**

## Why Collect Proofs?

- Issued by the Post Office
- Show actual stamp designs
- Made by the same dies and plates
- Part of stamp design process
- Have clear, sharp impressions
- Less expensive than issued stamps
- Look nice mounted on album pages.



**Scott 40**  
**\$625**



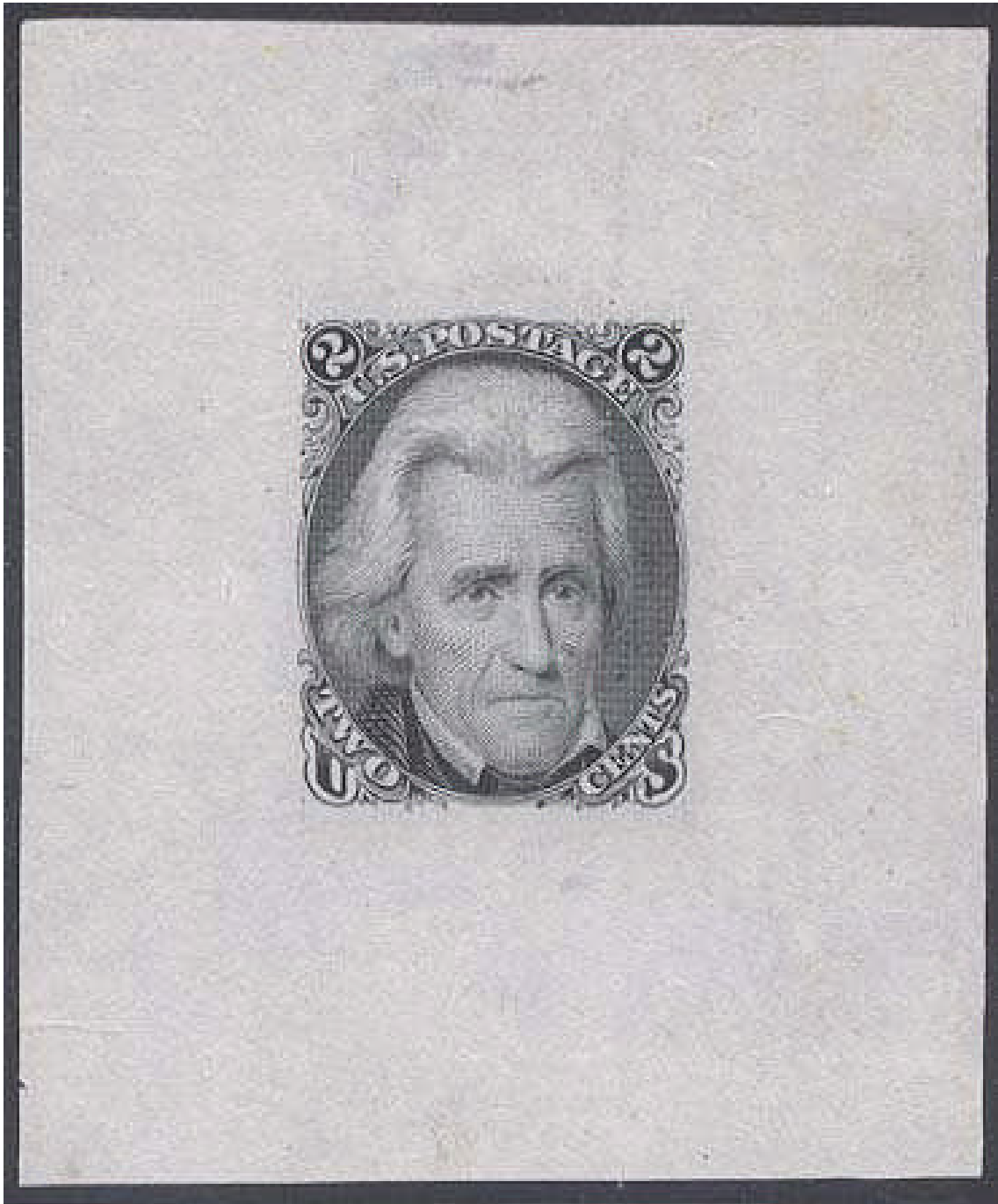
**Scott 40p4**  
**\$75**

## **Stamp Design Process**

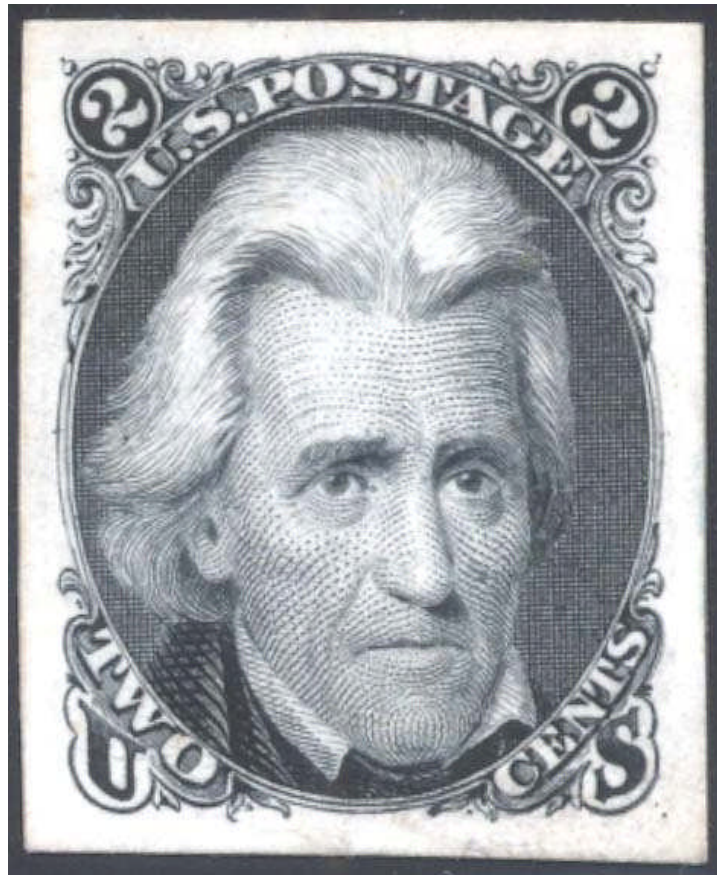
- 1. Models (essays) are made and design is chosen.**
- 2. Engraver creates die in reverse using soft steel (white areas show removed portions that will hold the ink)**



**3. Large Die Proof is printed on India paper to show details of the design**



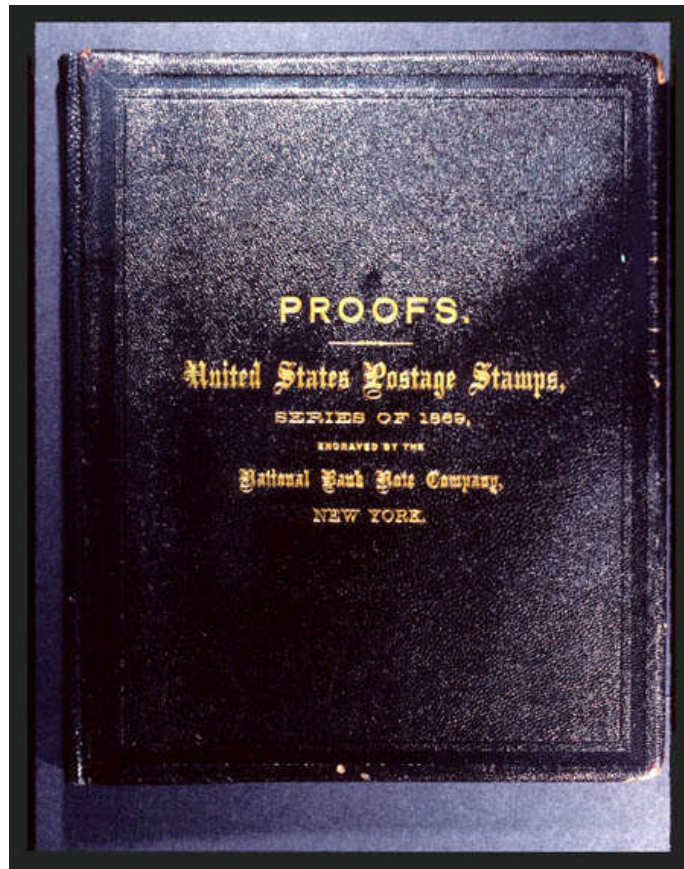
- 4. Design is approved.**
- 5. Die is hardened.**
- 6. Transfer roll is made.**
- 7. Plate is prepared with guidelines and dots**
- 8. Transfer roll is used to lay out the plate.**
- 9. Plate proofs are made on India paper to verify layout and transfers.**



- 10. Plate is hardened**
- 11. Stamps are printed.**
- 12. Plate proofs are later made on card stock.**



**The Banknote Companies and Post Office Department give samples to collectors and friends. Presentation books are rare.**



**Siegel Sale 693, 1988 Rarities, Lot 195 realized \$3500**

**Handouts were common through 1912 when collector protest “stopped” the practice. Some proofs, including re-created large die proofs, were handed out in the 1920’s and 1930’s.**

**Individual samples and blocks are more common.**



**So many sets of Official Stamps proofs were made that their catalog values range from only \$8 (low denomination) to \$35 for the \$2 to \$20 State Department stamps.**



#O83-O93P4, VF/XF. War Plate Proofs on card. Cat \$88

## **Large Die Proofs**

**Printed from the actual die. To prevent damage, the India paper is backed by card stock to help withstand the immense pressure of the press.**

**India paper has large margins showing the entire die (40 – 50 mm or larger)**

**The card stock is typically 5-7 inches to each side.**

**Sometimes show the die identification numbers.**

**Blue control numbers on the back.**

**Designated in the catalog as #P1.**





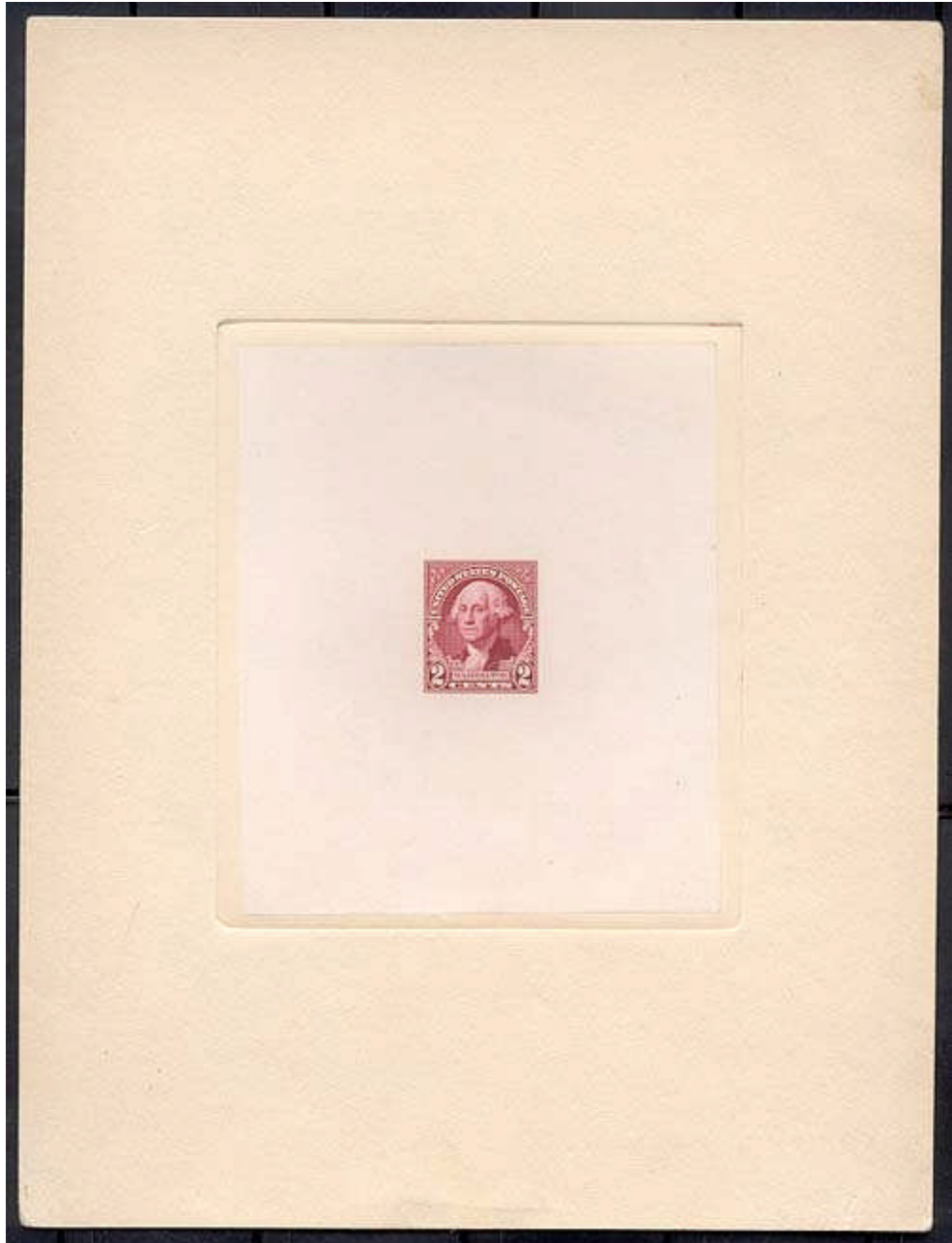
**573P1**



**150P1**

**Removed from card backing.**

**Note the texture of the India paper.**



**707P1**

**Note the impression of the die sunk in the card stock beyond the edges of the India paper.**



**745P1**

**BEP file copy - approved by the PMG**

**or another government handout (7-25 copies)  
made with authentic signatures after the  
stamp was issued.**



## Hybrid Die Proofs

**Printed before 1894 (before BEP) on India paper, cut to shape and mounted on card stock to resemble large die proofs.**



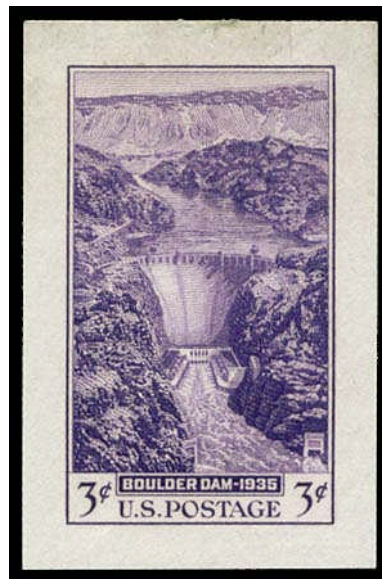


## **Small Die Proofs**

**Printed on small pieces of India paper (2-6 mm margins).**

**All proofs printed before 1904 are reprints and are not necessarily printed from original dies (see Roosevelt Small Die Proofs and Panama-Pacific Small Die Proofs later in the presentation).**

**Scott catalog designations #P2 and #P2a**



**774P2**



649P2



650P2

## **Plate Proofs**

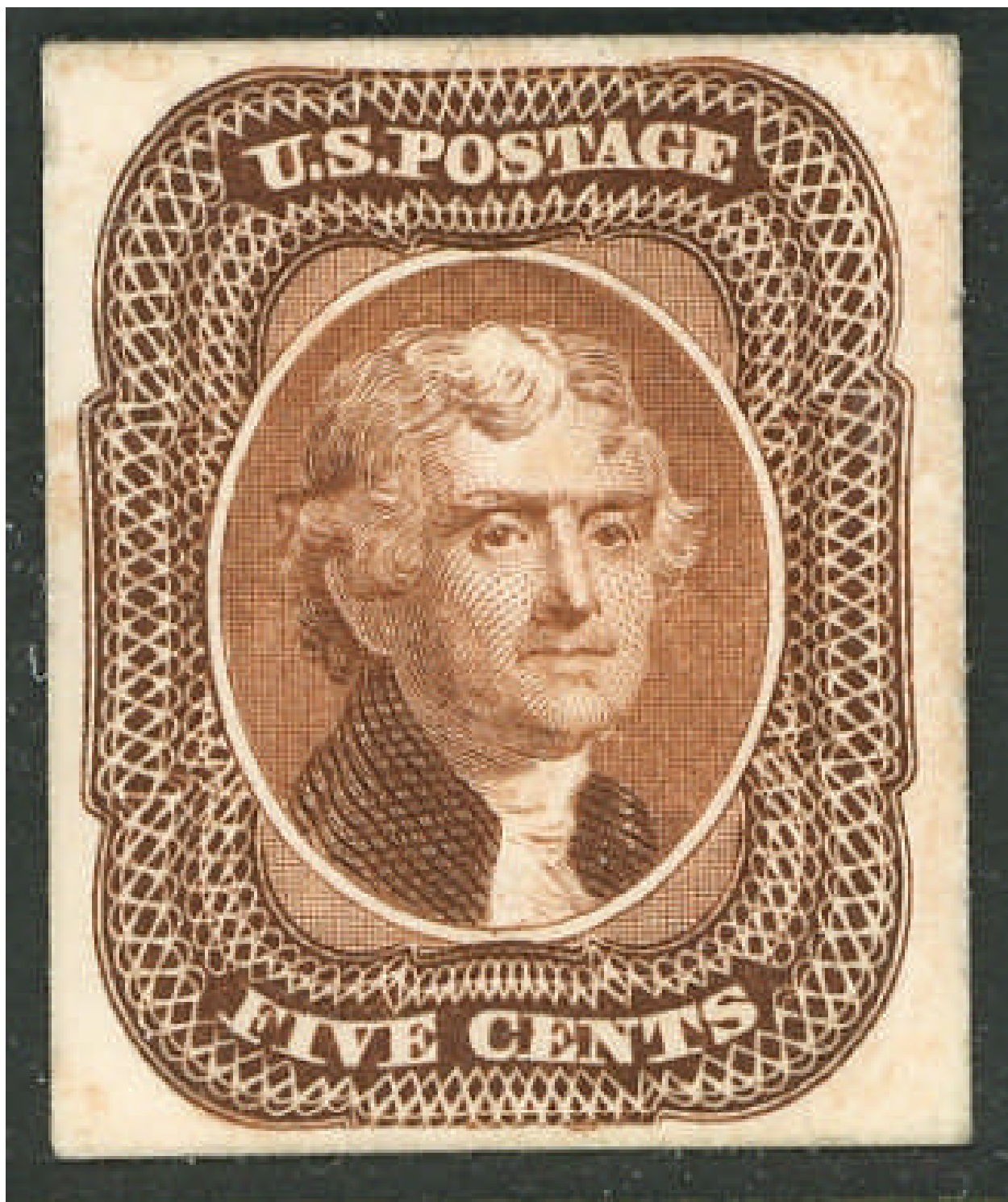
**Printed on both India paper (#P3) and card stock (#P4)**

**In general, proofs on India paper were printed before stamps in order to verify the plate.**

**In general, proofs printed on card stock were printed after stamps to make samples given as gifts from the Post Office Dept. upon request.**



30P3



42P4

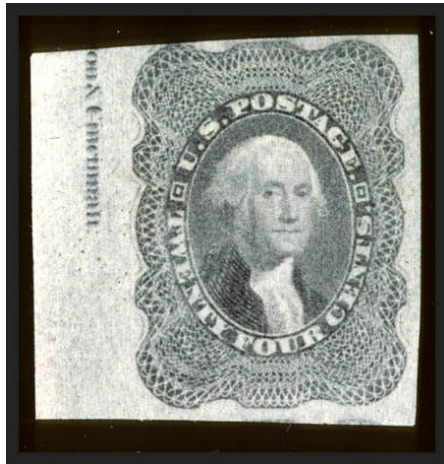


## Other Stamp Proofs

**These proofs were made on actual stamp paper**



**226a**



**37c**



**38 a**



**39a**

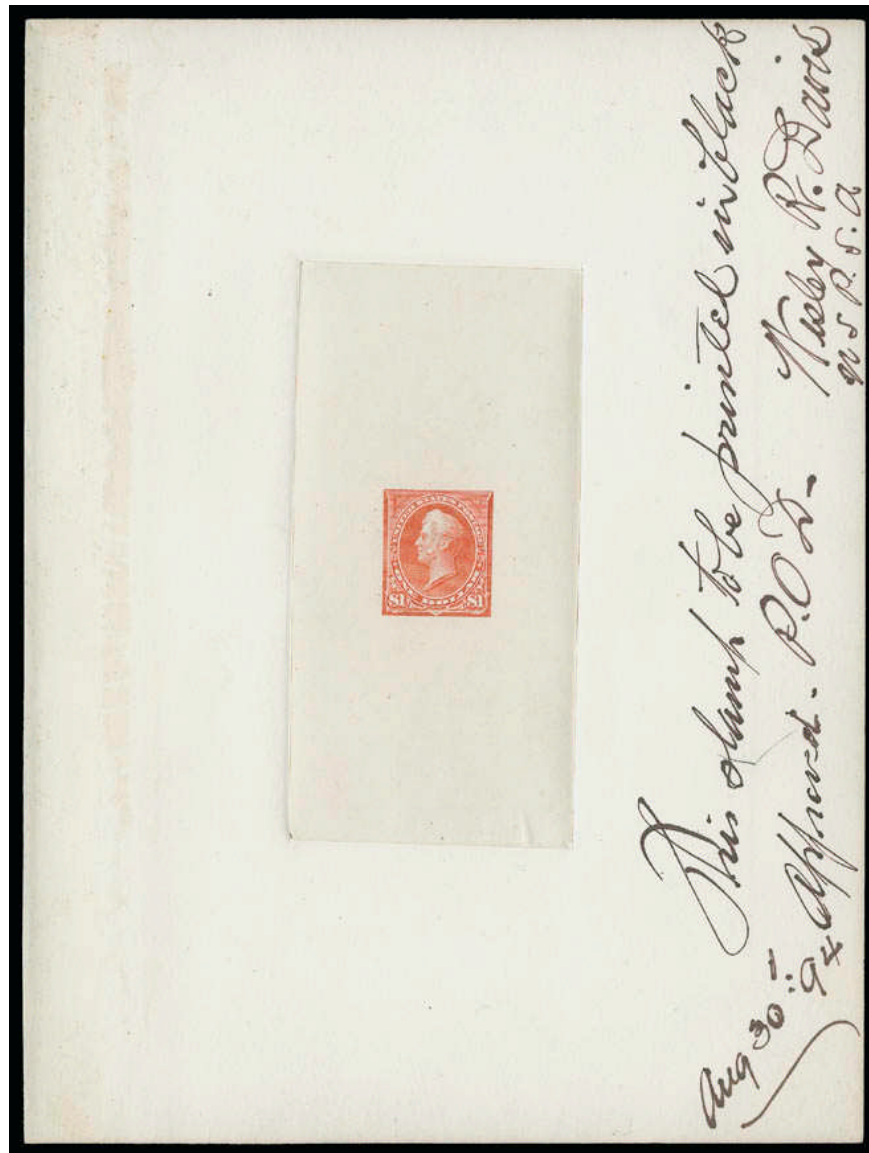


**241 imperf**

**A complete set of imperf pairs of the Columbian series are in the Benjamin Miller collection. They are proofs given out by PMG John Wanamaker.**

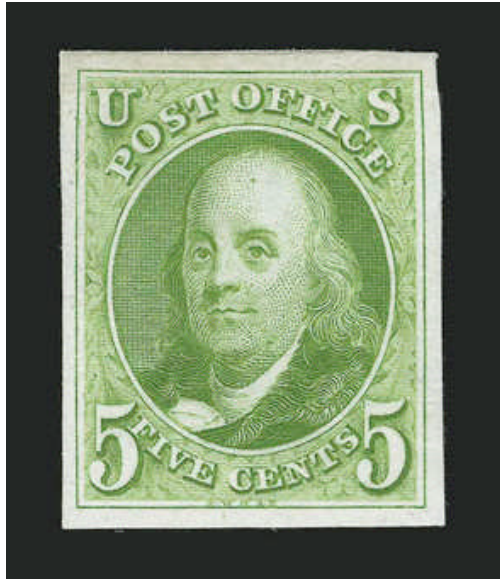
## Trial Color Proofs

Die proofs were printed in many different colors to allow the Post Office Dept to choose the color of the issued stamp.

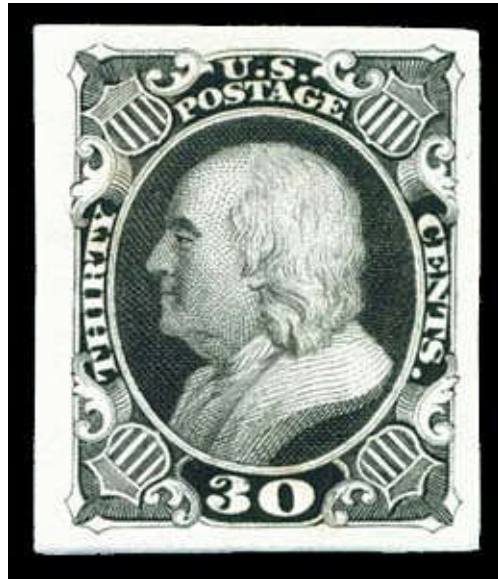


261TC

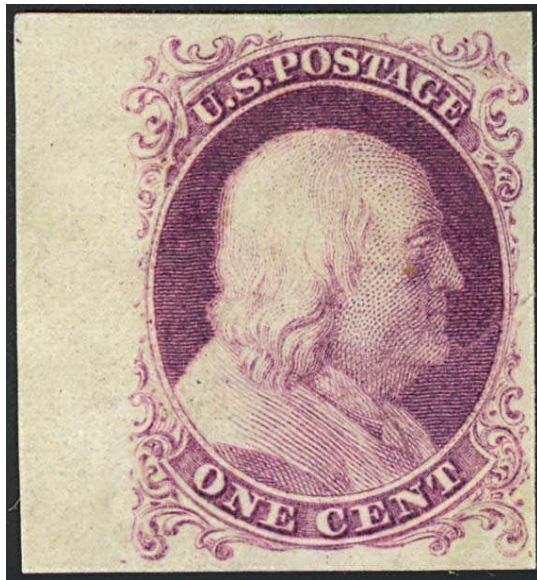




**1TC**



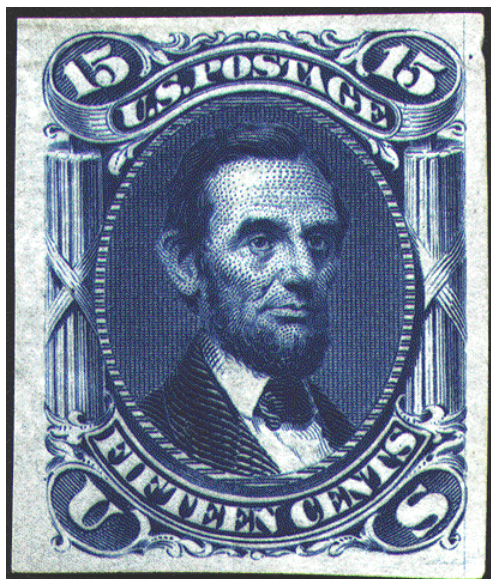
**38 TC**



**40 TC**



**73 TC**



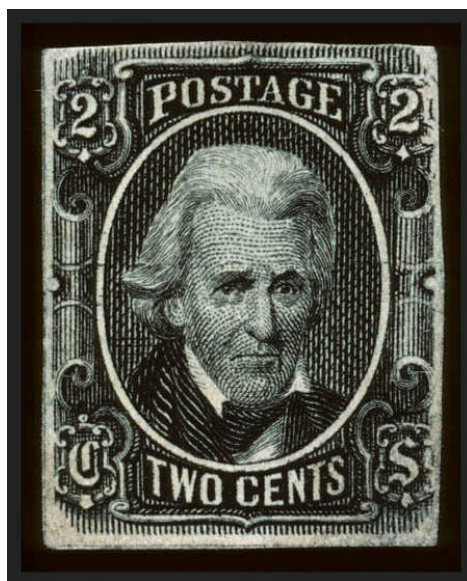
**77 TC**



**118 TC1**



**CSA 6TC1**



**CSA 8TC1a**



## SAMPLE & SAMPLE A Trial Color Proofs

To help choose the colors for the 1890-1893 definitives, two sets of earlier stamps were printed in other colors and overprinted **SAMPLE** and **SAMPLE A** (machine type and handwritten).



191SK

189SL



191SM

216SN

216SN

## **Atlanta Trial Color Proofs**

**Nearly complete set of US stamps printed on thin card in 5 colors (black, scarlet, brown, green, and blue) for display at the 1881 International Cotton Exhibition in Atlanta.**

**5 sheets of each color were printed**

**Bicolor stamps (high values of 1869 series) were printed in 14 different color combinations**

**Included were regular stamps, postage dues, officials, newspapers and carriers.**



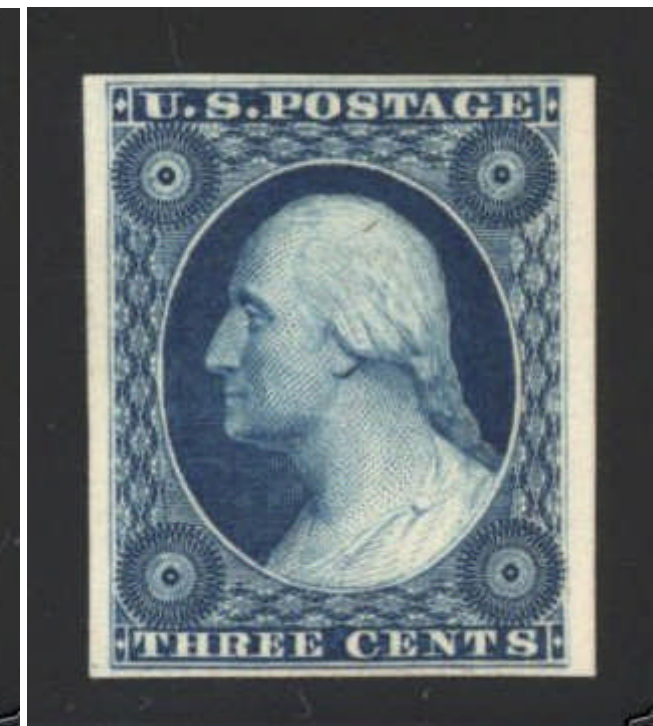
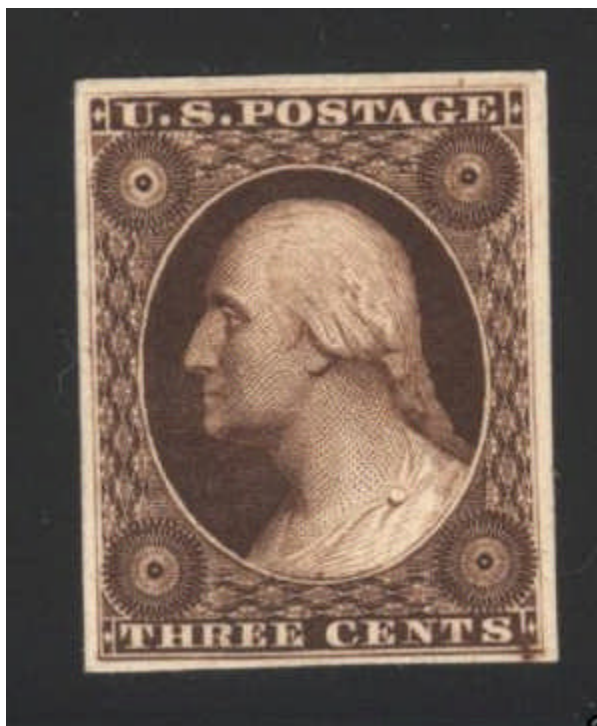
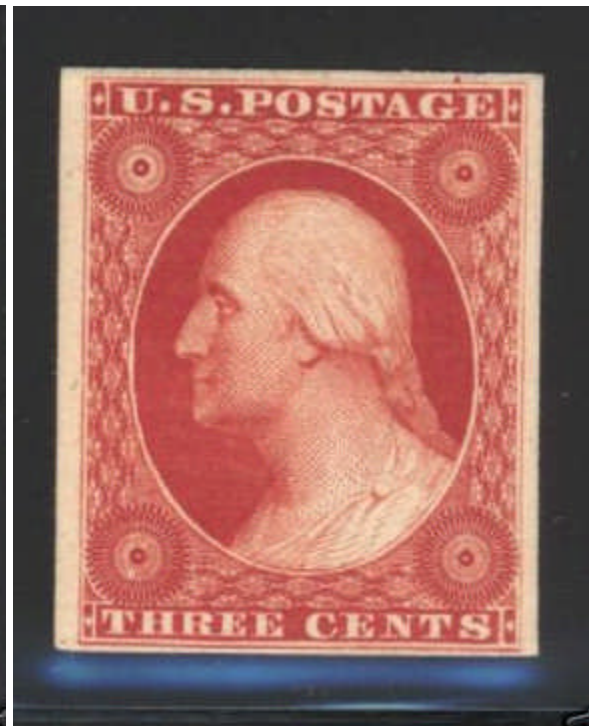
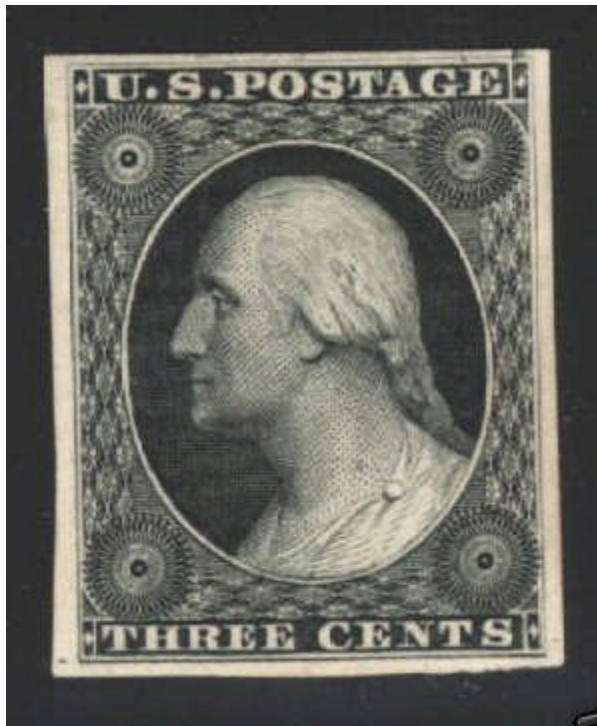


**4TC and 3TC in blocks of 4 (blue)**



**40TC to 47TC in green**





**41TC in black, scarlet and brown**



**High values of the 1869 series 129TC –  
132TC printed in 14 different color  
combinations**





**High values of the State Dept Official stamps were also printed in different color combinations.**

## **Roosevelt Small Die Proofs**

**Albums containing 308 different US designs were created by the BEP and handed out by the Post Office Department as gifts**

**Small die Proofs (3-5 mm margins) were printed on white wove paper and mounted on 34 pages of gray card stock.**

**The albums had another 34 blank pages for future issues.**

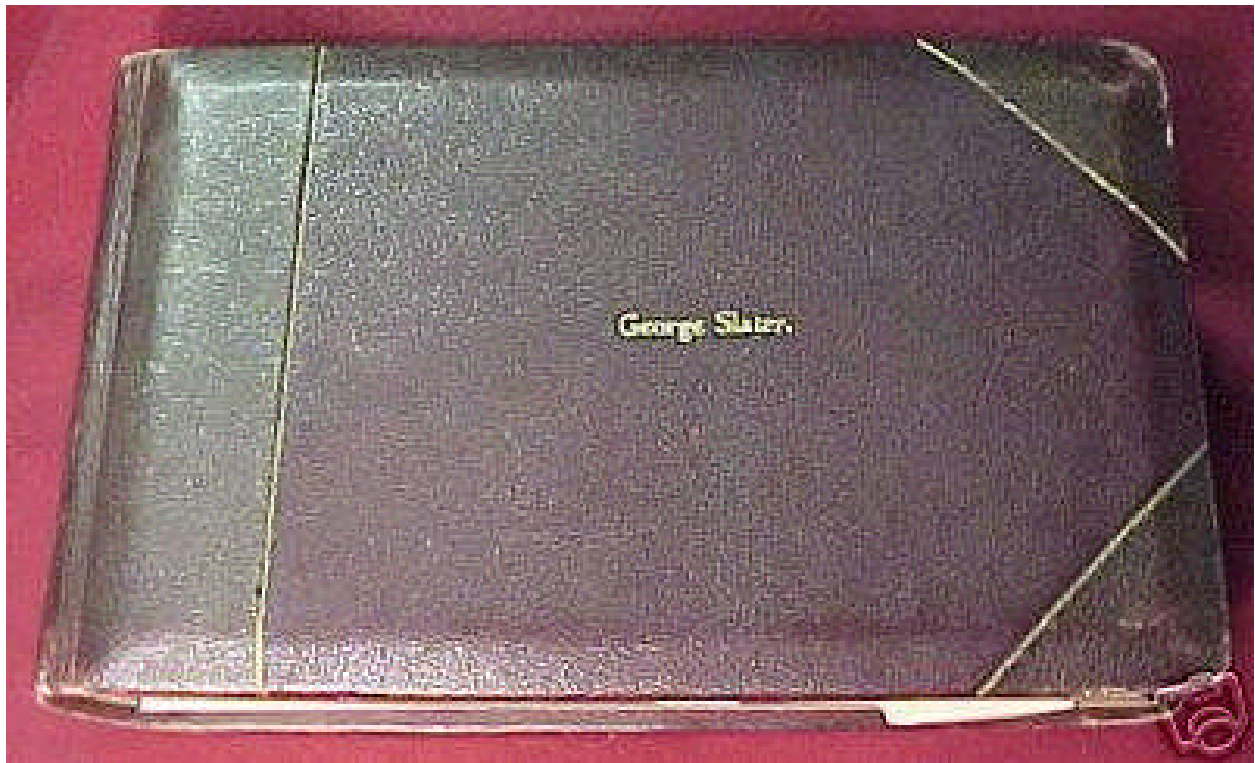
**85 albums were made**

**53 albums were personalized (names in gold lettering on cover)**

**Many albums were broken up and the stamps were sold individually or as complete pages.**

**Less than 12 albums remain intact**

**Named for President Theodore Roosevelt, the albums were created and presented by 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant PMG Edwin C. Madden and J. H. Reeve, chief of the stamp division under Madden.**



**Album presented to George Slater, a friend of Madden who lived in Detroit Michigan (available on Ebay for \$75,000)**



**Page 1: The 1847 (1P2 & 2P2) and 1875 (3P2 & 4P2) were printed from the 1875 dies. Two were printed clearly and two were purposely blurred to look different. The clear and blurred proofs were incorrectly mounted (5 cent blurred with 10 cent clear)**





**Page 20: J31P2 – J37P2 1894 postage dues.  
The 3 cent die (J33P2) was cracked but was  
still used to make the proofs.**



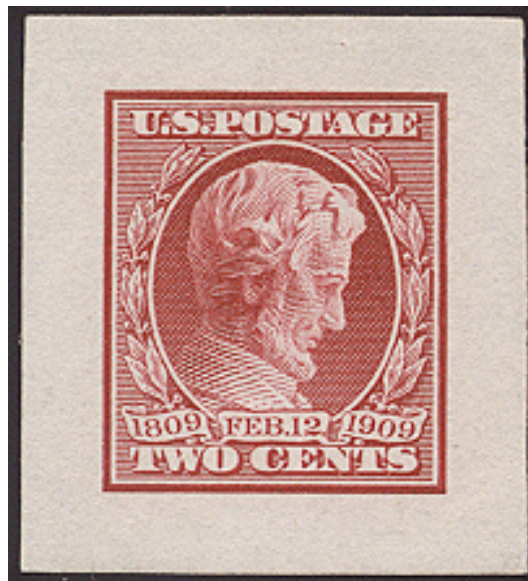


**Page 32: Cuban stamps printed by the BEP were also included (Cuba 227P2 – 231P2, E3P2)**

**By 1902, some dies no longer existed and others were modified by adding secret marks (ie., Continental Banknote stamps). The 24 cent, 30 cent, and 90 cent banknotes had added secret marks even though these were never issued as postage stamps.**



**Stamps issued beyond 1903 were printed and distributed but complaints by collectors stopped this practice by 1912.**



**367P2**

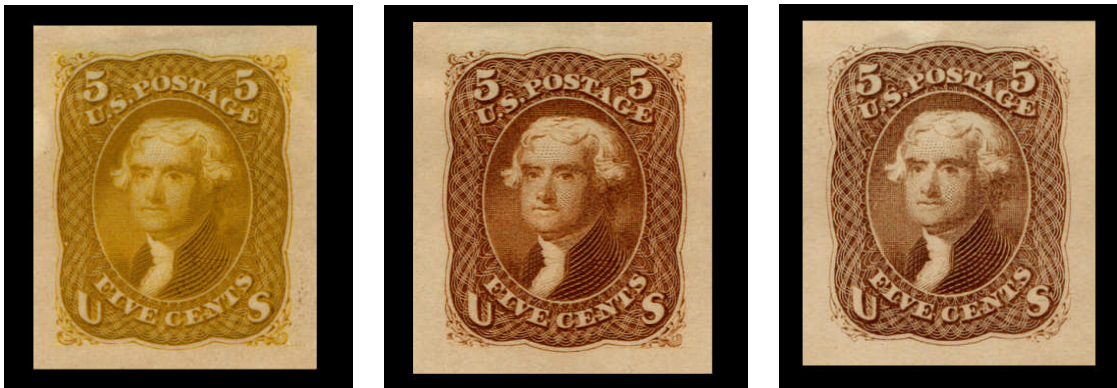


**373P2**

## **Panama – Pacific Small Die Proofs**

**3-4 sets were printed for the Panama-Pacific Exhibition in 1914-1915 to be displayed in San Francisco.**

**413 proofs were made from 368 dies. For example, 67P2a, 75P2a, and 76P2a were all printed from the same die.**



**The Smithsonian National Postal Museum has a complete set and many images can be seen on the Arago internet database.**

**Proofs designated in the Scott catalog as #P2a**

**Printed on wove paper, many of the proofs have darkened over time.**



**3P2a**

**4P2a**

**A new die was made for J33P2a to replace the cracked die used in 1903.**





## More images from Arago



236P2a

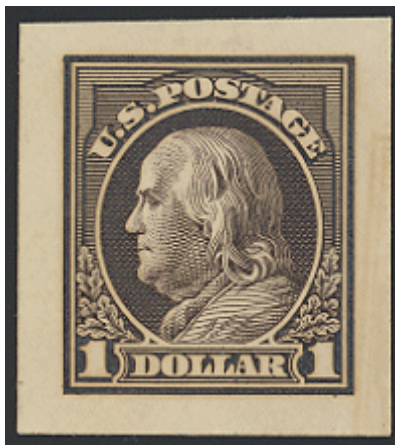


Philippines E2P2a

**Occasionally, examples come up for auction or are sold by dealers.**



**JQ1P2a – JQ5P2a, Matthew Bennett Sale  
300, Lot 416 sold for \$2400**



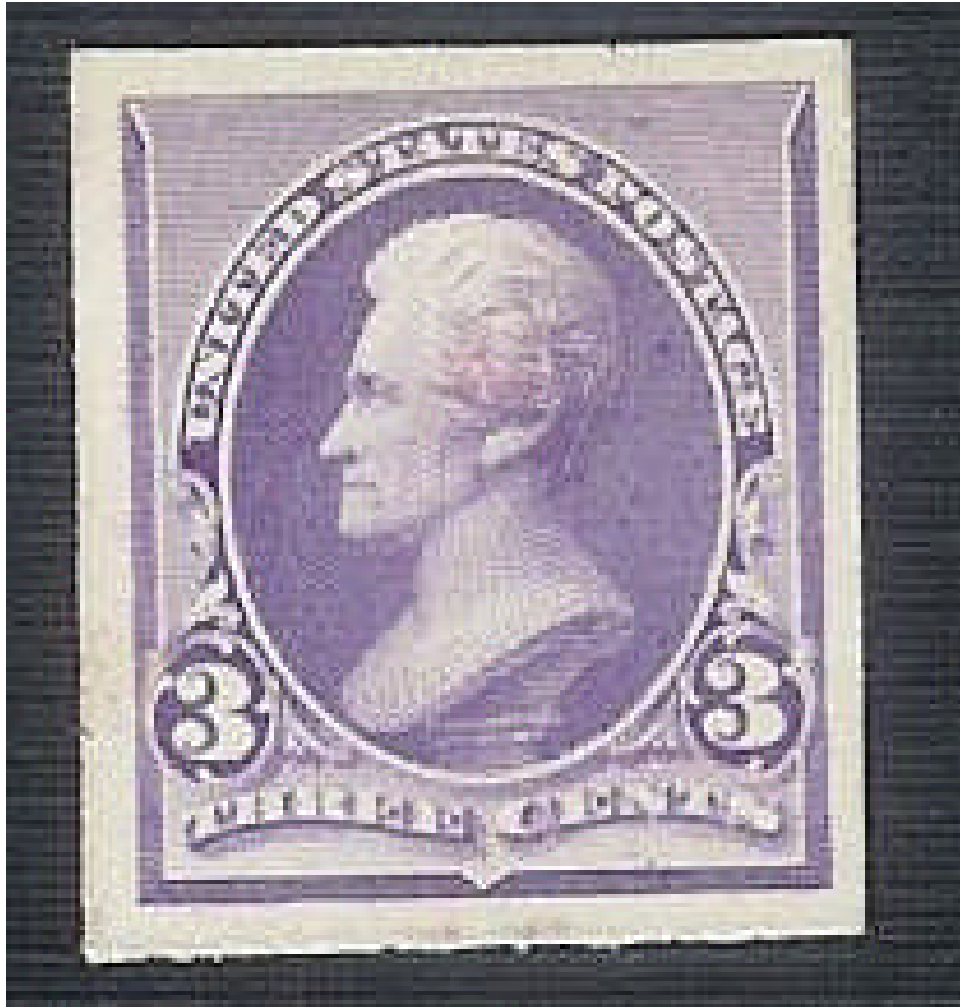
**423P2a available from Jack Nalbandian for  
\$2300 (Harmer 2006 Sale 296, Lot 1170 sold  
for \$1207.50 incl. 15% buyer's premium)**



**The less expensive India paper and card proofs can be bought on EBAY**



**113P3 bought on Ebay for \$36.75**



**221P4 bought on Ebay for \$10.50**

## **Conclusion**

**Since building complete sets of proofs is nearly impossible, adding proofs of a single issue is a nice way to enhance an exhibit or collection.**

**Collecting proofs is challenging but far less difficult than their stamp counterparts.**

**They are overlooked by many collectors and many are not very expensive.**

**Large die proofs, printed in quantities of 5-25, tend to be the most expensive.**

**Small die proofs, printed in quantities of about 100, are obtainable, with few exceptions, for \$50-\$200**

**Many card plate proofs are available for \$5 to \$60**

## Some other interesting proofs



121aP4 plate proof on card



121P4





122aP4



Atlanta TC proof  
shaved and perfed

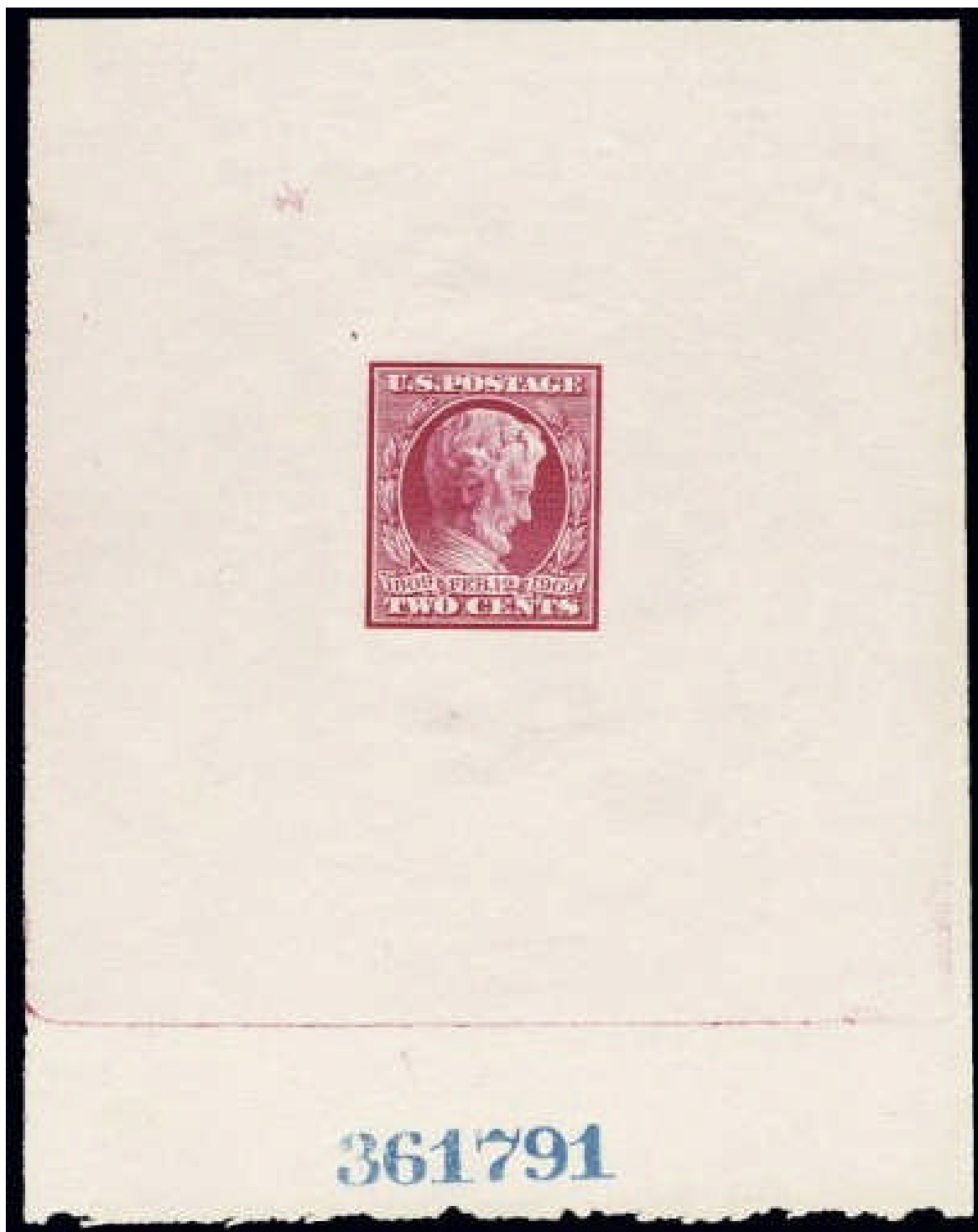


147P3





**216P1 showing additional imprints**



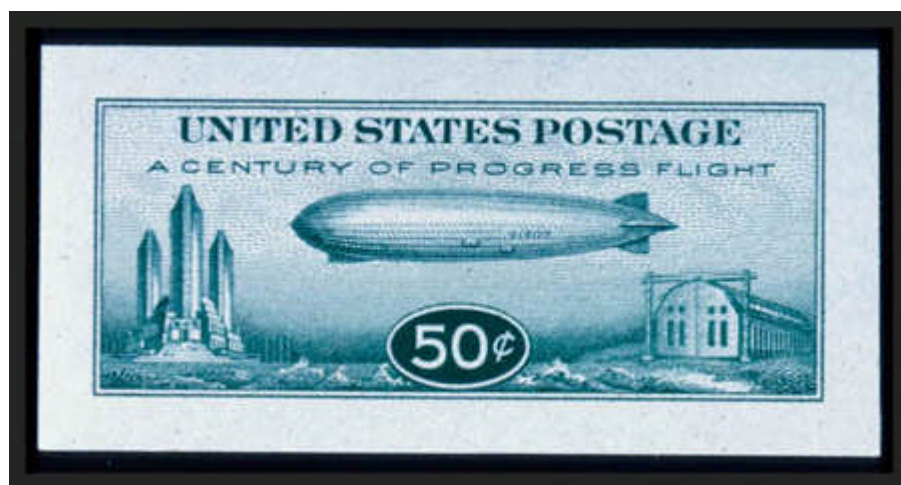
**367P1 showing blue control number on front**



245 TC



286 TC



**C18P2 only 2 known**



**O68aP4**

**O69aP4**  
**inverts**

**O71aP4**



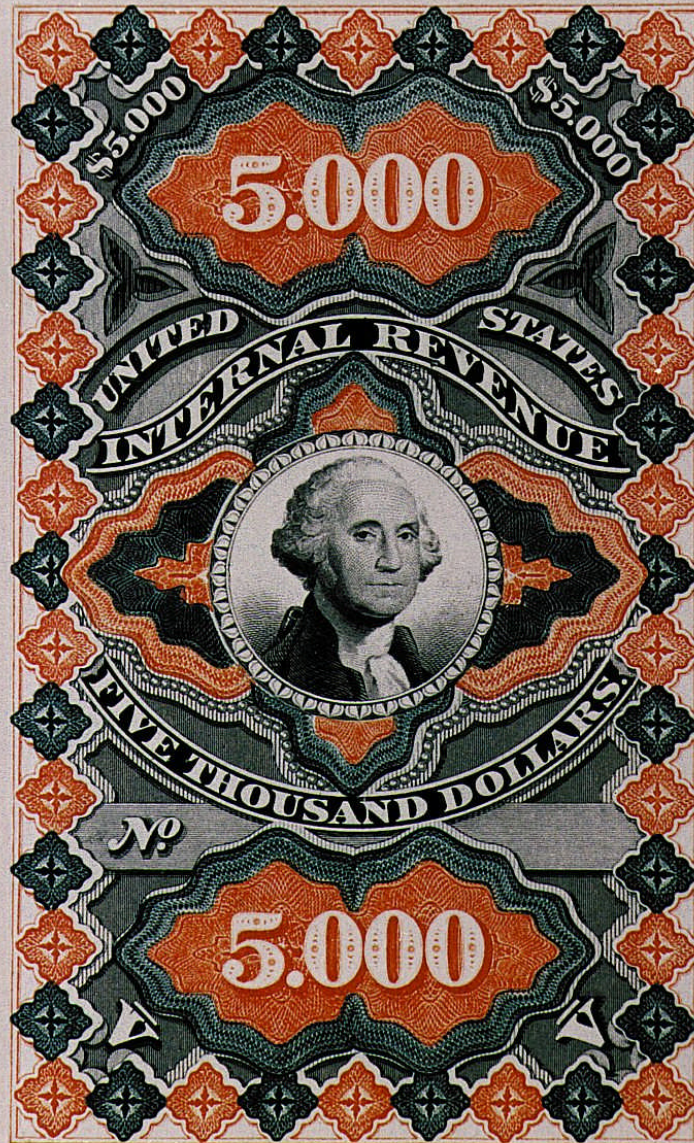


**Ru6p3**



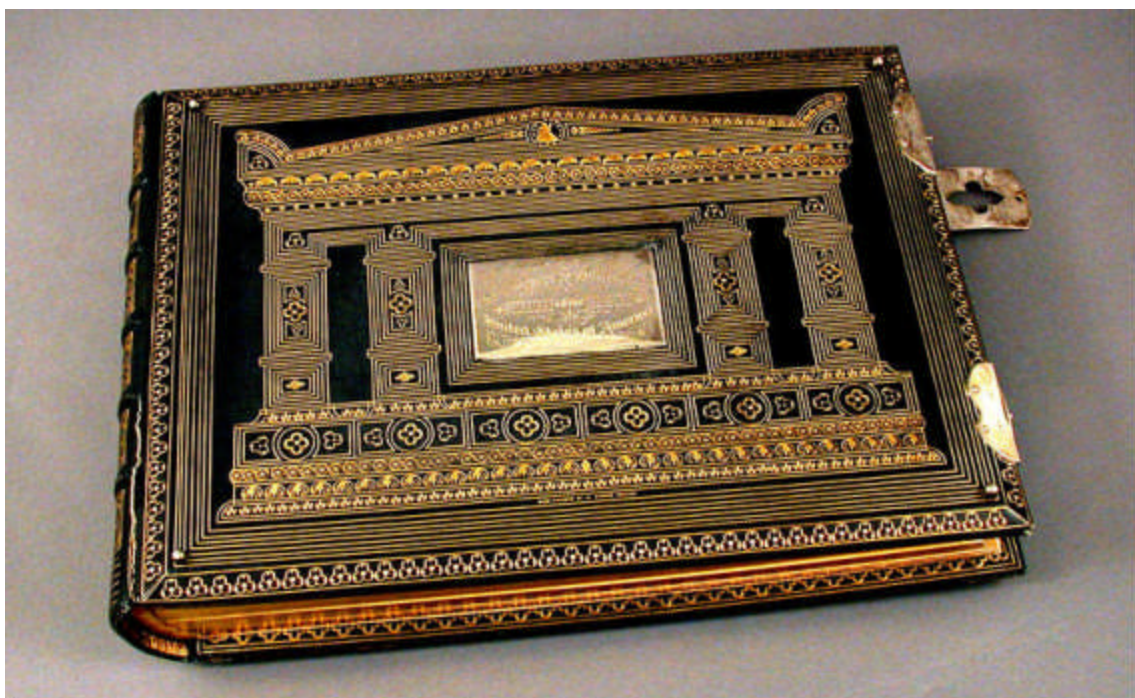
**Ro47p3**





Unissued \$5000 revenue proof from the  
Boutwell Presentation Album





## **The Boutwell Presentation Album of United States Proofs.**

The album is meticulously bound in leather with gold hand-tooling and is contained in a matching carrying case. The volume's cover is embellished with a sterling plaque inscribed "Hon. George S. Boutwell, Secretary of the Treasury, United States of America".

Measuring 22 by 15 inches and weighing almost 40 pounds, the album displays some 40 pages with approximately 400 proofs, including First, Second and Third Issue revenues, proprietary issues, and the private die issues for match and medicine companies. Many of the proofs are mounted in pairs and blocks, and every page is artfully arranged. Among the highlights of the proofs are examples of the \$500 and \$5,000 Persian Rug issues, so named for their elaborate multicolored designs. The \$5,000 was never issued and exists only as a proof. One of the rarest of the private die stamps is shown in proof form. It is the Thos. E. Wilson 4c Black, of which there exists only one issued stamp and a small number of proofs.

Presented in 1874 by Joseph R. Carpenter. Sold by Siegel in 1998 Rarities Sale, Lot 383 realized \$50,000

Album and sample proofs can be viewed on Arago at the National Postal Museum website.

George Sewall Boutwell is shown on the 1942-1957 Puerto Rico Rectified Spirits Revenue Stamps (RE33-RE51)

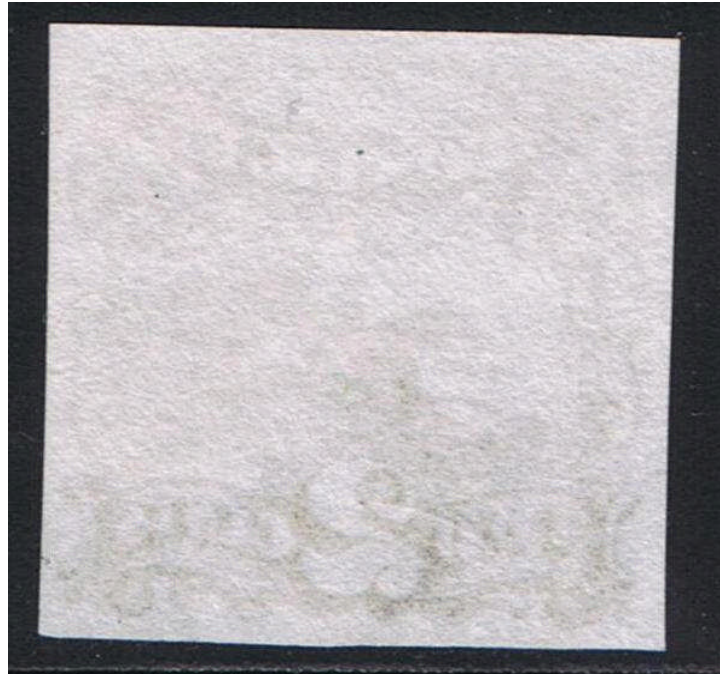


**McKinley Presentation album containing large die proofs of the  
1901 Pan-American Set**

Sold with another presidential presentation album containing the Trans-Mississippi set by Siegel, sale 837 (2001), lot 253 realized \$10,000



# **Paper Types**



**India Paper (p3)**



**Card (p4)**